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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 061455Z JUL 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4368
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 21355

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MOPS, PEPR, LE, IS, FR, XF
SUBJ: FRENCH VIEW OF LEBANESE SITUATION

BEGIN SUMMARY: QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR SERVANT INFORMS US GOF DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT EVENTS IN LEBANON AND FEARS DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF ISRAELIS WHICH COULD SPELL END FOR ME PEACE EFFORTS. FRENCH HAVE BEEN DIPLOMATICALLY ACTIVE IN URGING RESTRAINT AND MADE STRONG DEMARCHE TO SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IN PARIS JULY 5 TO EFFECT SYRIAN ACTIONS OUT OF PROPORTION TO POSSIBLE PROVOCATIONS AND TAKING MANY INNOCENT LIVES. AGREED PRESS STATEMENT FOR USE AT CONCLUSION EUROPEAN SUMMIT IN BREMEN JULY 7 WILL CALL FOR END TO FIGHTING AND FRENCH WILL PROPOSE STRENGTHENING THE LANGUAGE FURTHER. FRENCH DISAPPOINTED WITH SARKIS BUT BELIEVE HIS RESIGNATION WOULD BE A DISASTER AND WILL ENCOURAGE HIM TO ACT
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DECISIVELY. END SUMMARY.

1. WE CALLED ON QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST SERVANT AT NOON JULY 6 TO OBTAIN FRENCH VIEWS OF SITUATION IN LEBANON. SERVANT, WHO HAD JUST SPOKEN ON THE PHONE WITH FRENCH CHARGE IN LEBANON AND BEEN INFORMED OF ISRAELI OVERFLIGHTS OF BEIRUT; SAID THAT

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GOF FULLY SHARES US CONCERN ABOUT THE DANGEROUS DIRECTION OF EVENTS. FRENCH HAVE BEEN ACTIVE DIPLOMATICALLY IN URGING RESTRAINT AND ASKING OTHERS, INCLUDING THE SAUDIS, TO WEIGH IN ALSO. SERVANT SAID THAT GOF DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT SAUDIS APPROVE OF CURRENT MASSIVE SYRIAN BOMBARDMENTS OF CHRISTIAN POSITIONS BUT THEY WILL NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH THE SYRIANS PUBLICLY.

2. QUAI WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SYRIAN RESPONSE TO DEMARCHES MADE IN DAMASCUS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SITUATION IN LEBANON NOW IN HAND. NORTH AFRICA AND ME DIRECTOR LECOMPTE CALLED IN SYRIAN AMBASSADOR JULY 5 TO REINFORCE FRENCH CONCERN. ACCORDING TO THE MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION FROM WHICH SERVANT READ, THE DEMARCHE WAS QUITE FORCEFUL. LECOMPTE SPOKE OF EXTREME USE OF FORCE OUT OF PROPORTION TO POSSIBLE PROVOCATIONS, LARGE-SCALE LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES, EFFECT CONTRARY TO STATED SYRIAN DESIRE TO REINFORCE AUTHORITY OF LEBANESE STATE, NEGATIVE EFFECT ON STABILITY THROUGHOUT LEBANON INCLUDING SOUTHERN AREAS WHERE UNIFIL STATIONED AND POSSIBLE THREAT TO PEACE OF THE WHOLE REGION. (SERVANT NOTED THAT, PERHAPS UNFORTUNATELY, THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IN PARIS IS A CHRISTIAN AND THIS MIGHT AFFECT THE WAY HE REPORTS THE DEMARCHE OR THE WAY IT IS RECEIVED IN DAMASCUS.)
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3. SERVANT SAID THAT GOF REGARDS LEBANESE SITUATION SERIOUSLY FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH IS ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT CURRENT ME PEACE EFFORTS. IN LIGHT OF CLOSE TIES BETWEEN LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND THE ISRAELIS THE GOF IS CONCERNED ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS. DIRECT ISRAELI ACTION AGAINST SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON MIGHT BE SUFFICIENT TO CREATE A CLIMATE IN WHICH FURTHER ME PEACE TALKS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. SERVANT SPOKE OF CONCERN THAT SOME ELEMENTS IN THE ISRAELI ESTABLISHMENT MIGHT FAVOR A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST SYRIA TO DESTROY ITS MILITARY POTENTIAL--A TASK EASILY WITHIN THE CAPACITY OF ISRAEL'S AIR FORCE. IF EVENTS EVOLVED SO THAT THIS CAME ABOUT, ALL CURRENT ME PEACE EFFORTS WOULD END.

4. (INFORMATION IN THIS PARAGRAPH SHOULD BE TREATED AS NOFORN.) THE EUROPEAN SUMMIT AT BREMEN WILL NOT ISSUE A DECLARATION ON THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT A PRESS STATEMENT, TO BE USED IN THE POST SUMMIT PRESS BRIEFING HAS BEEN PREPARED. TWO PART GUIDANCE WAS WORKED OUT

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ACTION SS-25

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AT A ME EXPERTS MEETING ON MONDAY. THE FIRST PART DEALS WITH THE GENERAL ME SITUATION AND THE SECOND WITH LEBANON. THE GOF IS PROPOSING TO REVISE THE STATEMENT TO GIVE PROMINENCE TO THE LEBANESE SITUATION. ACCORDING TO OUR RECOLLECTION FROM A QUICK READING OF THE FRENCH DRAFT (THE LEBANESE PORTION OF WHICH NOT YET BEEN APPROVED BY THE OTHER EIGHT) THE ESSENCE OF THE PRESS GUIDANCE IS AS FOLLOWS:

"LEBANON: EUROPEAN COUNSEL VIEWS WITH GREAT DISQUIET VIOLENCE IN LEBANON RESULTING IN GRAVE LOSSES OF INNOCENT LIVES; CALLS ON ALL PARTIES TO CEASE FIGHTING AND WORK TO RESTORE PEACE AND ORDER; SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO RESTORE THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE STATE. "

"MIDDLE EAST: EUROPEAN COUNSEL CONFIRMS ITS VIEW THAT ONLY A GLOBAL (OVERALL) SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM CAN BRING LASTING PEACE AND

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SECURITY; REGRETS THAT THE INITIATIVE OF PRESIDENT SADAT HAS NOT LED TO GREATER PROGRESS TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT BUT HOPES THAT FURTHER PROGRESS WILL NOW BE POSSIBLE; REAFFIRMS THAT IN THE COUNSEL'S VIEW THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A JUST ME SETTLEMENT ARE CONTAINED IN THE COUNSEL'S DECLARATION OF JUNE 29, 1977.

5. FRENCH ARE ASKING THEMSELVES SAME QUESTIONS AS WE CONCERNING SYRIAN MOTIVATION IN SUCH A MASSIVE RESPONSE TO CHRISTIAN PROVOCATIONS. THEY ARE DISAPPOINTED AND DISCOURAGED BY SARKIS' LACK OF DECISIVENESS. THEY THINK HE MISSED AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY AFTER THE STATIONING OF UNIFIL TO EXTEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE. DESPITE HIS FAILURES TO DATE THEY FEAR THAT IF HE RESIGNS THE SITUATION WILL DETERIORATE IN UNFORESEEABLE WAY. THEY SEE BACHIR GEMAYEL AS A MAN TOTALLY OVER HIS HEAD IN A POLITICAL SITUATION IN WHICH HE IS THE MAJOR FIGURE BUT WHICH HE IS COMPLETELY UNABLE TO COMPREHEND. FRENCH ARE WORKING NOW TO END THE FIGHTING AND AFTER THAT WILL DO WHAT THEY CAN TO HELP SARKIS.

6. FRENCH AMBASSADOR ARGOD, WHO HAS BEEN ON CONSULTATION IN PARIS, RETURNING TO BEIRUT TODAY.
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